



## Christian Voices for Life

### Weekly Pro-Life

Education

Prayer

Action

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### This week's Topic: Embryonic Stem Cell Research

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**Education:** The human body contains many types of specialized cells: skin cells, muscle cells, nerve cells. Normally, skin cells will only produce more skin cells. If an organ such as a kidney is lost or damaged, the body cannot make a new one. Stem cells are cells that are themselves unspecialized, but are capable of producing a variety of specialized cells. There is a tremendous potential for stem cells to be used for medical treatment of paralysis and other serious conditions. It was once thought that young embryos were the only source of stem cells. “Extra” embryos from the process of In Vitro Fertilization were donated to research and

killed as their stem cells were harvested. More recently, however, procedures have been developed to produce stem cells from adult tissue—even from a patient’s own skin cells, which eliminates the problem of immune rejection of foreign tissue. In spite of this development, however, some researchers still pursue research using embryonic tissue. Some argue that the “spare” embryos from in vitro fertilization would die anyway if not used for research, and therefore it is justified to use them. However, the fact that a person is likely to die, or has been abandoned by their parents, does not convey the right to kill them.

For more on stem cells, see the information sheet on the Christian Voices for Life web site, and an article available from the US Conf. of Catholic Bishops at <http://www.usccb.org/prolife/issues/bioethic/stemcell/index.shtml>.



**Prayer:** Dear Father God, please touch the hearts of medical researchers who want to use stem cells to improve the lives of ill or injured people. Help them to understand that the desire to do good does not justify doing evil. Help them to accept and take advantage of the methodology available to produce stem cells without killing embryos.

We pray for the conversion of all who are involved in taking the lives of human embryos, that they recognize the humanity of the embryo from the moment of conception. Give them the courage to refuse to participate in the taking of a human life, and to walk away from any job that requires them to do so.



**Action:** Try to be aware of federal and state legislation to provide funding for embryonic and/or adult stem cell research. Contact your representatives to encourage banning the funding of any research involving the killing of embryos, but rather to fund research using stem cells derived from adult tissue.

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